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The Unique Vegetable:Asparagus

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USU Student Organic Farm

THE GARDEN BEAT

community supported agriculture

May 28 & 30, 2013

Vol. 4, Issue 3



IN THE BOX
asparagus
silverado chard
mizuna mustard greens
red grand rapids lettuce
black seeded simpson lettuce
bibb lettuce
parade green onions
pakchoi

Asparagus Fettuccine Alfredo

Looking for a quick and simple meal that will make people think that you slaved in the kitchen for hours, Asparagus Fettuccine is the perfect dish for you. Due to the dairy content of this vegetarian friendly dish leftovers should be stored in an air tight container in the refrigerator and eaten within three to four days.

Ready in: 20 mins

Serves: 4

Ingredients

1 bunch of asparagus
1 pound fettuccine
4 tablespoons butter (cubed)
1 cup heavy cream
Pinch grated or ground nutmeg
2 ¾ teaspoons salt
1/8 teaspoon black pepper (preferably freshly-ground)
½ cup grated parmesan cheese

Directions

1. Add two teaspoons of salt to a large pot of water. Bring to a boil on high heat.
2. Wash the asparagus. Snap off the tough bottom of the spear. Chop the spears into one inch long pieces.
3. Cook the fettuccine in the boiling water for 8 minutes, then add the asparagus and cook for an additional 4 minutes.
4. Drain the pasta and asparagus.
5. Toss with butter, cream, nutmeg, pepper, parmesan, and the rest of the salt.
6. Serve and Enjoy!

The Unique Vegetable: Asparagus

Ah, asparagus. It's a veggie that's all too welcome during the "hungry gap" between the last of the winter root crops and before the first early summer veggies. It's a pretty odd one at that. It's robust flavor, with a slight bitter edge, is often regarded as an acquired taste that is "grown" into. Even still, asparagus has quite the following; I remember hunting it along ditch banks with my dad, as many others do in Utah. It became a bit competitive, strangely enough. We'd often find clumps of it that had already been harvested, and my father often complained when we'd find clumps of stems with only the tips harvested; "such a waste," he'd say, often while harvesting the remaining stem because of his thrifty nature.

The plants are unique in other ways too. As one of the very few perennial vegetables grown commercially, the plant comes up year after year, where the growth from the year before collects energy for the tender spears that come next spring. This enables

asparagus and other perennial vegetables to produce when annual veggies are scarce. Annuals, like beans for instance, have to germinate and grow enough roots and foliage to support the development of fruits in the same year. Annuals race against the clock; asparagus grows leisurely. It can take a newly planted asparagus plant three years before it produces enough to harvest.

The asparagus we offer at the farm comes from a nearby USU facility, where they are raised without pesticides or herbicides. The plants themselves are thirteen years old! In fact, an established bed can produce for twenty years or more, and there are even records of some fields producing for fifty!

Despite their longevity, asparagus loses quality quickly after picking, so be sure to use them when they're at their best. Their short season and succulent qualities made them a delicacy for royalty, from French monarchs to Roman Caesars, so try letting their royal qualities shine with simple preparations of steaming, pan frying, or grilling.

-By Andrew Croft

Want to grow your own asparagus?

VARIETIES: Jersey Giant, Jersey Knight, UC 157 F1 and Purple Passion perform well in Utah.

CULTIVATION:

Planting: Asparagus can be grown from seed or crowns. Seeds should be started indoors in January. Plant asparagus crowns or transplants in April in trenches 8 inches deep, with rows spaced 3-4 feet apart. Cover the plants with 2 inches of soil and gradually add more soil throughout the growing season.

Irrigation: Asparagus prefers frequent watering the first 2 years, about 1-2 inches per week. Reduce watering to every 2-3 weeks after 4 years.

Harvest: Begin harvesting asparagus the spring 2 years after planting. Cut when 9 inches tall. Harvest for 4 weeks the first year and 6-8 weeks in the following years.

For more information visit:

http://extension.usu.edu/yardandgarden/html/vegetables_herbs/asparagus



Announcements

To keep your greens crisp and help them last longer give them a nice cold ice bath for about 30 minutes. This can be done right when you get home from picking them up or even later at a more convenient time. Some items might need immediate attention if they are looking limp. We try not to wash the veggies too much (especially greens) because wet greens are prone to browning and rotting. Keep this in mind as your veggies might come with dirt on them. However, please remember to wash all produce before eating. Organic produce is not exempt from the washing before eating rule.

Volunteer hours:

Please send us an email or show up at the time above, if it is your first time we suggest coming early so we can give you the details of getting started!

Tuesday, 9 am to 12 pm, (planting, weeding, mulching, watering and fixing things)

Thursday, 9 am to 1 pm, (harvesting produce for the CSA members)

Friday, 9 am to 12 pm, (like Tuesday, regular farm duties)

Missed pickup policy:

If you forget to pickup your share for the week at your scheduled time, we are so sorry but you will have to forfeit the share for the week. If you let us know a week in advance that you will be gone, we can definitely work something out so you don't miss a share. Also, you can have a friend, neighbor, or relative come pick up your share for you if you will be gone. They just need to come at your scheduled pickup time and let us know who they are picking up for.

What you might see in your next box

silverado chard

tatsoi

pak choi

vit mache

parsley

radishes

red grand rapids lettuce

red russian kale

On the Farm News

Hello everyone! This week has been quite eventful. We have gotten so much done! One of our projects has been to set out the organic grasshopper bait. Last year we were overcome with grasshoppers in our field and around our hoop houses. They sure loved eating your vegetables. Keeping them at bay was a constant concern. This year we really hope to prevent such high populations, and in turn, prevent high injury levels. As an organic farm, we will undoubtedly have feeding on our crops. However, with our preventative efforts, we hope to lower that.

Nolo Bait is an OMRI approved grasshopper control agent. The OMRI sign of approval indicates that it is safe for use in certified organic systems. The bait is a flaky wheat bran coated substance that is highly desirable to the grasshoppers. It has no adverse effects on non-target organisms and is safe for use around humans, pets, birds, wildlife and won't contaminate waterways. Beneficial insects are not harmed by the bait either.



The active disease organism is host specific to grasshoppers and Mormon crickets. This disease causes the grasshoppers to stop feeding, become lethargic and die. It is contagious to other grasshoppers as they eat other diseased grasshoppers in the treated area.

In addition to grasshopper control, we continue to beautify the farm by painting the pick up area benches. Paint helps protect the wood, and keep our farm happy and bright. We also continue to transplant and direct seed new plants and new successions. We also have been replacing damaged or eaten (by mice...we think) plants with healthy extras from the greenhouse.

For more asparagus recipes and news articles visit our blog at:

<http://ususof.blogspot.com/>

